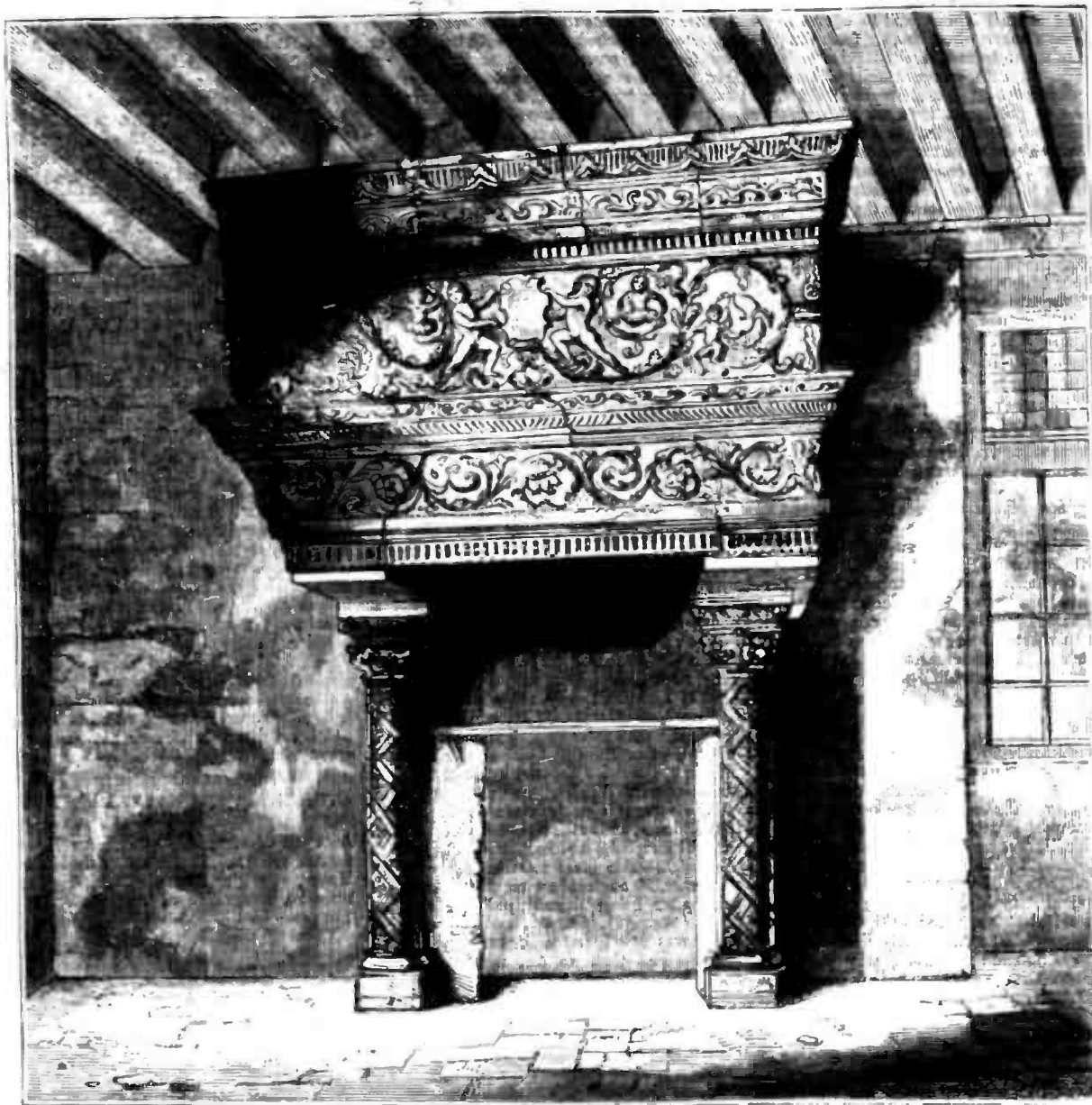


## RENAISSANCE CHIMNEY-PIECE AT ORLEANS.



## CHIMNEY-PIECE AT ORLEANS.

IN a narrow street, near the Market-place, in the very centre of the ancient city of Orleans, called the Rue du Tabourg, and numbered 15, stand the remains of a mansion, which, from the prodigality of its sculptures and carvings, betokens the former abode of some rich and powerful individual. The external front is filled with windows, having very ornate stonework, and has a large and small door from the street, extremely remarkable from the high reliefs carved thereon, which completely cover their surfaces. These reliefs are composed of several subjects, in separate compartments, representing events of war, allegorical emblems, processions, and other combinations, in which many figures are employed. Through these doors a passage conducts into an interior court, at the extreme end of which stands an ancient well, still possessing its original ironwork. A few years since the apex of the roofing which covers it was terminated by a massive group of thistles, painted blue, and adorned with gilding. On the left-hand of this court-yard is a gallery supported by three semi-circular arches, based on columns about 8 feet high, the shafts each of a single stone, and having delicately-sculptured capitals of the same design as the engraved chimney-

piece. This arcade carries the enclosing wall of the upper part of the house; the ceiling is panelled; and in the centre of each division are emblems in relief of hearts pierced by arrows, flaming torches, a turtle, a sun, a plate laden with pears, in form similar to those known in the Touraine as the *Roussette*; and lastly, *fleurs-de-lis*. On the side-wall of the colonnade are the remains of two busts, in bas-relief, a third at the end, and in the court-yard a fourth. These are too much mutilated to distinguish the features with accuracy. A leaden water-pipe descends from the parapet of the house to the yard, near the well, and still retains a spiral decoration of brilliant blue, apparently painted in oil, with alternate bands of gilding. The arcade serves as a peristyle to a circular staircase, which ascends from the vaulted cellars through the entire edifice: the dimensions are noble, each step, of a single stone, being 7 feet long: on each landing, carved bosses sustain the vaultings of the ceiling. At the further end of the colonnade, a door on the left leads into the grand saloon, where the chimney-piece stands, of which the annexed engraving is a representation. The saloon is about 45 feet long, by 30 feet in width; all its other ornaments have disappeared, with the exception of a shield bearing three *fleurs-de-lis*, placed as they are at present on the arms of France. This fine

apartment is now degraded to being the workshop of a maker of *sabots*; piles of wood encumber the floor, and the carvers of these rude appendages to the nether limbs of Frenchmen have replaced with their boisterous mirth, the convivialities of the most chivalrous period of ancient France. She curious visitor is reminded of the expected gratuity by an inscription scrawled with charcoal, on the front of the chimney piece, as follows:—"Messieurs et Dames, qui venez voir la Cheminée, n'oubliez pas la bonne." The ground apartment next the street is formed into a shop, where these wooden shoes are sold to the plebeian inhabitants of the city.

It has been said that this house was built and inhabited by the father of Marie Torichet, others have pretended that it was erected by the Cardinal Bricconnet, but according to the tradition handed down by those who have possessed and resided in it, it is believed to have been built, and decorated by Charles VII. The elegance of the construction indicates that it must have been destined for some exalted personage living before 1470. The lavish and delicate sculptures, the ornaments with the *fleurs-de-lis*, and the fruits characterising the produce of the Touraine, all concur in its

\* The frieze is much broken, but is restored in our view, which is engraved from a sketch by Mr. Mogford.